

EDITORIAL

Interim Sessions

ON DECEMBER 13 the California Medical Association rang down the curtain on its Interim Session of the House of Delegates. The closing date came just nine days after the American Medical Association had concluded its Interim Session in St. Louis.

These two sessions were alike in one respect, unlike in another. The similarity came in the fact that both could probably have been cancelled without doing any damage. The disparity lay in the fact that the C.M.A. meeting was probably the last of its kind to be held, whereas the A.M.A. winter session is destined to continue.

Most medical organizations find it possible to conduct their legislative work on the basis of one annual meeting. If adequate time is allowed at annual sessions, the policy-making work of any large body can be conducted on an unemotional, straight-line basis. This concept, of course, is conditioned on the maintenance of a properly selected board of directors or council to act between the annual sessions of the top policy-making body.

When the A.M.A. started its Interim Sessions, times were somewhat different from the present. The House of Delegates, by and large, did not repose in the A.M.A. Board of Trustees the high degree of confidence noted today. Members of the House of Delegates wanted additional opportunity to establish policy and eliminate the possibility of poor policy emanating from the more frequently meeting Board of Trustees. The Interim Session was the device used to achieve this aim.

Once the A.M.A. Interim Session was launched, it became the occasion for adding scientific sessions. Then came scientific exhibits, then technical exhibits. Thus a second annual session was created in easy stages.

Attendance at the scientific meetings of the In-

terim Session of the A.M.A. has been somewhat disappointing to those who labor to produce a scientifically sound program. The ideal of bringing post-graduate training to the various cities of the country has not been realized.

The C.M.A. Interim Session was probably also set up as a protest on the part of some members against infrequent meetings, between which the C.M.A. Council handled all the Association's affairs. From almost the beginning of these meetings, however, the lack of confidence in the Council which was apparent in the revised Constitution and By-Laws, under which the Interim Session was created, began to dissipate. The goal of introducing business at one meeting, to be acted upon six months later, was never realized.

Emergency measures, eligible for action at the same meeting at which they were introduced, became the rule rather than the exception. Reference committees, which begged for expressions of opinion during the six-month lag between meetings, found little or no response from either members of the House of Delegates or the C.M.A. membership at large. The object sought in deferring action for six months was never attained.

Now, the By-Laws have been so amended that an Interim Session of the C.M.A. House of Delegates will be held only if the House itself, in Annual Session, votes to hold an Interim Session in the final six months of the year. Provision is still made for calling special meetings of the House, either by action of members of the House or by the Council.

Thus the opportunity for more frequent meetings of the House of Delegates is preserved but the requirement for additional meetings is dropped. This arrangement should be amply flexible to take care of the Association's business without adding the burden of another meeting to the load of the Delegates. This makes sense.